

**SUMMARY OF THE
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2000**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Thursday, January 27, 2000 at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its co-chairs, Ms. Carol Batterton of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and Dr. Charles Brokopp of the Utah Department of Health (UDOH). A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issues contained in the committee's agenda.*

AGENDA ITEMS

Review of Minutes and Action Items from the January 13, 2000 Meeting

The minutes from the January 13, 2000 meeting should reflect that the announced withdrawal of funding is that of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Office of Research and Development (ORD) and not that of the entire USEPA.

The summary of the January 13, 2000 meeting was approved and will be forwarded to the contractor for submittal to USEPA. No contractor support was available for this meeting due to severe winter storms in North Carolina.

The NELAC Board of Directors met on January 18, 2000 and decided to set up a meeting with Deputy Administrator Michael McCabe to discuss ongoing support from USEPA for NELAC. No date has been set for this meeting.

Independent of NELAC, several committee members stated their intention to identify political contacts as well as contacts within the Environmental Council of States (ECOS) from whom to seek support for NELAC. Other committee members will research old minutes and notes from meetings of the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) and other meetings where the original needs for environmental laboratory accreditation and NELAC were discussed. Reports from the General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) will be shared with the entire committee. A comparison of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) to the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act (CLIA) will be prepared and shared with the committee.

The next ELAB meeting by teleconference is scheduled for February 15, 2000. The future of NELAC will be an item on their agenda. A white paper on NELAC will be developed by a subcommittee of ELAB.

Response from the NELAC Board Meeting on January 18, 2000

Dr. Kenneth Jackson of the New York State Department of Health reviewed the response of the NELAC Board of Directors to recommendations made by this committee that were taken to the board on January 18, 2000. The board will set up a meeting with USEPA Deputy Administrator McCabe. USEPA may retain the full-time employees (FTEs) assigned to NELAC and transfer those individuals to another program within the Agency. Staff changes could occur if the positions are transferred to other programs. The funding for contractor support and the interim meeting is what could be cut by USEPA. A decision will likely be made in 30 to 45 days. The \$500,000 annual budget actually comes from the various programs within USEPA. USEPA funding continues through next year.

Many people and programs benefit from laboratory accreditation. Although laboratories may be willing to contribute to the cost of the program, other data users and programs who benefit should also contribute to the cost of running the program. The committee needs to identify those areas within USEPA where support exists for NELAC, as well as the important environmental programs that rely on laboratory data. USEPA already has certification and training programs located in its Las Vegas and Cincinnati laboratories. The future location of NELAC within USEPA is really a decision for USEPA to make. Mr. Jerry Parr of Catalyst Information Resources, L.L.C. will research information on the organization of laboratories within USEPA and provide the information to the committee.

Next Steps

The committee will continue to gather information from USEPA and others on options that might be useful to pursue. It will be important for this committee to identify what is really needed to sustain NELAC. Funding, program support, and congressional report language (initiated outside the NELAC structure) may all become parts of the follow-up action. Earmarked funding would need to go to a specific office or program within USEPA. Earmarked funding for NELAC is the preferred route discussed by the committee.

Several members of the committee discussed the possibility of linking NELAC to one or more of the “hot” programs within USEPA. Child health, food safety, endocrine disruptors, drinking water, environmental justice, or partnerships with states or international agencies were suggested. Data integrity is also important. The potential impact of poor quality data could cost millions of program dollars. The average person in many environmental programs has no idea of data quality issues. A need exists to increase awareness of all environmental quality assurance (QA) programs.

The committee discussed a few ideas of areas within USEPA in which NELAC might best fit. The committee recognized that USEPA would need to make this decision. The board may be asked to suggest ways to integrate NELAC into the USEPA.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting by teleconference of the Transition Committee will be Thursday, February 10, 2000 at 4 p.m. EST.

Attachment A

**ACTION ITEMS
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Dr. Brokopp will send final summaries of the December 16, 1999 meeting and January 13, 2000 teleconference to RTI.	Completed
2.	Dr. Jackson will discuss NELAC with USEPA officials.	On-going
3.	Committee members will share historical information on the original justifications for NELAC.	On-going
4.	Mr. Parr will provide information on the location and function of USEPA laboratories.	On-going

**PARTICIPANTS
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2000**

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